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Letter dated 11 August 2008 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

As a follow-up to the discussions at the 5951st and subsequent meetings of the Security Council, I have the honour to inform you of the following position of the Russian Federation.

On 7 August 2008, Georgian forces, in violation of the existing agreements on ceasefire in the zone of Georgian-Ossetian conflict, launched a military operation in South Ossetia. The first hours of the operation inflicted considerable destruction on the city of Tshinval; about 1,500 peaceful civilians, most of them Russian citizens, lost their lives. A targeted massive assault was launched on the Russian peacekeeping contingent which is part of the Joint Peacekeeping Forces. The Russian peacekeepers sustained casualties.

The scale of the attack against the servicemen of the Russian Federation deployed in the territory of Georgia on legitimate grounds, and against citizens of the Russian Federation, the number of deaths it caused as well as the statements by the political and military leadership of Georgia, which revealed the Georgian side's aggressive intentions, demonstrate that we are dealing with the illegal use of military force against the Russian Federation. In those circumstances, the Russian side had no choice but to use its inherent right to self-defence enshrined in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations.

I have the honour to assure you that the use of force by the Russian side is strictly proportionate to the scale of the attack and pursues no other goal but to protect the Russian peacekeeping contingent and citizens of the Russian Federation from the illegal actions of the Georgian side and to prevent future armed attacks against them. The Russian side does not carry out attacks against civilians or civilian facilities. The Russian military units have been given appropriate orders.

The use of force by the Russian side in self-defence will continue until the circumstances that brought it about cease to exist.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vitaly **Churkin**
Ambassador

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